

T H E L O U N G E R.

[N° XXXV.]

Saturday, Oct. 1. 1785.

Totus mundus agit histrionem.

THERE is nothing which can give us a stronger picture of the littleness of mankind, than the consideration of the circumstances which produce or govern mens different opinions, tastes, sentiments, and conduct. If we look around us, we shall find, that in those important particulars men are seldom directed by the rule of reason, or by what, upon sober consideration, appears most conducive to happiness; they are frequently moved by some accidental humour, by some prevailing fashion, or by the influence of their acquaintance, and the society among whom they live.

Varenus was designed to pursue an ecclesiastical profession: he entered, early in life, into views suitable to that intention. He translated, when a very young man, Buchanan's Psalms into English metre, and published an excellent Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. A change of circumstances made *Varenus* alter his professional views: he threw off his black coat, turned layman, was introduced a member of Lord B.'s club, and from that time he became a much-admired champion for infidelity.

Lucius is reputed to be a man of taste, but he is never ten days of the same mind; and the reason is, because, though he is abundantly acute, yet in a matter of taste he is unable to form a decided opinion for himself. He therefore takes his opinions, not from himself, but from what he hears from others. If a new

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book is published, he buys it, reads it, but says nothing of it till he hears what character it bears. In a company whose opinions he respects he hears it commended, and the next company he is in he follows that opinion, and supports it by most excellent remarks. If you meet with Lucius a week after, it is odds but you find him supporting a different opinion, and with arguments equally cogent. Since you last saw him he has been in some other company, where he met with an opinion contrary to what he formerly adopted.

Philander has, by indefatigable labour, and at considerable expence, amassed a large collection of medals. He will undertake to tell you their different ages by their rust, and judges of their antiquity by the clink of their sound. He has them ranged in a most exact order, and would give any sum, or spend any length of time, to purchase a medal which would fill up a deficiency or chasm in the series. You will conclude from this that *Philander* must have amassed a treasure of knowledge, as well as of medals; that he will at least be a complete historian; that he will know not only the faces but the characters of all the great men who have adorned the annals of mankind; that he will be an exact chronologist, and know the dates and æras of every great event; and that from what is contained in his cabinet, he will be able to reduce to certainty, and give the most indisputed proofs of all the controverted facts in antiquity. If you suppose this, you are mistaken; *Philander* thinks of nothing but having a large and valuable collection of medals.

Eugenius has a noble library of books: all the splendid editions of the classics, all the valuable works of the moderns, are there to be found. I once accompanied a gentleman to see this library; who, after admiring its magnificence, said, turning to me, "*Eugenius* must be a man of immense fortune; and his other expences will no doubt be equal to what we see here laid out on books." I answered, that he was perfectly mistaken. "*Eugenius's* fortune is small; and to supply his library he has impaired even that little fortune which he has: his necessities have reduced him to live sparingly, to be ill-served, to dismiss his carriage, and to walk on foot." "Then," said the gentleman, "literary pursuits must be *Eugenius's* sole object, and ab-

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“forb the taste for every thing else.”—“Yes. Literary pursuits are his sole object; but it is to buy books, not to read them.”

Pompilius is a man of nice sentiment. *Refinement, delicacy, fine feelings, fineness*, are words constantly in his mouth. He is continually haranguing on the coarseness of the world, and perpetually giving hints as if he were of a superior order of being. He talks of the filthy *canaille* as below his notice, and despises the common pleasures of the world, as vulgar amusements. He thinks it beneath him to laugh heartily on any occasion; and I never see him, but I am put in mind of Mr Stephen, in *Every Man in his Humour*, he looks so *proud, so melancholy*, and so *gentlemanlike*. By this strange affectation *Pompilius* narrows the circle of his enjoyments; he excludes himself from those which are the best, the most easily found, and the most durable. He sometimes goes to the theatre: but he has formed a standard to himself which is never come up to. He finds fault with the sentiments of the play, and the execution of the players: Even the mirth of the company gives him offence. Being present at a performance where the audience was much delighted, and expressed their approbation by noise and loud claps of applause, “Ay, Ay!” says *Pompilius*, looking with a contemptuous grin, “the savages are at it!”

Clitander was the dearest friend that *Timocles* ever had. In an unlucky moment a quarrel ensued. In that unlucky moment *Clitander* used an opprobrious and reproachful expression, and applied it to *Timocles*. By the custom of the world this was not to be borne with impunity:—a challenge ensued, and *Timocles* slew his dearest friend.—“Give me back my friend!” cried *Timocles*, in a fit of wretchedness and despair almost reaching to madness; “What to me are the customs of the world? what are its opinions and sentiments, to the life of my murdered friend?”

How vain, how little are almost all our pursuits! Accident, humour, acquaintance, fancy, or mistaken prejudice, guide us in almost every thing, and verify the saying of the apostle, that *none of us liveth to himself*. The false infidel, the wou'd-be man of taste, and the ignorant medalist, the unlearned purchaser of books,

books, the affected man of sentiment, and the dupe to the maxims of modern honour, none of these can be said to live to themselves: they seek not happiness where it is placed, but are all the martyrs of folly and of vanity,—of folly and of vanity not their own.

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